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Boys (165) and girls (139) in grades 3-6 in an almost entirely Negro Higher Horizons school in New York City were studied to determine the extent to which they differed in their aspiration to white-collar and professional occupations and in their ability to identify these occupations. The children were asked to make a choice among "professional," white-collar," and "other" occupations and were given 18 plates of the Vocational Apperception Test to ascertain their ability to identify an occupation and its locus of performance. Data were analyzed in relation to high and low academic achievement. Girls expressed professional or white-collar goals more readily than boys, but appeared less realistic in their aspirations in terms of their academic achievement. In addition, 59 percent of academically achieving boys did not express a level of aspiration comparable to the girls, a finding which questions the impact of schooling, even in a Higher Horizons school, on the aspiration of Negro boys. (NH)

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CONTENTS

EDITORIAL 131

PUPIL MOBILITY—IMPLICATIONS FOR URBAN EDUCATION ..... *Orlando F. Furno and Harry C. Hendrickson* 134

AN ANALYSIS OF THE FISCAL PROBLEMS OF LARGE CITY SCHOOL SYSTEMS ..... *Austin D. Swanson* 149

CULTURALLY DISADVANTAGED BOYS' AND GIRLS' ASPIRATIONS TO AND KNOWLEDGE OF WHITE-COLLAR AND PROFESSIONAL OCCUPATIONS ..... *Edward T. Clark* 164

PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH ON TEACHER EDUCATION FOR THE GREAT CITIES ..... *N. L. Gage* 175

UD 009 914

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CULTURALLY DISADVANTAGED BOYS' AND GIRLS' ASPIRATIONS TO AND KNOWLEDGE OF WHITE-COLLAR AND PROFESSIONAL OCCUPATIONS

BY EDWARD T. CLARK

According to Sexton (7), the vocational aspirations of Negroes are high, often reaching, among the young and innocent of low status, into the Walter Mitty-like fantasy world. Ausubel and Ausubel (2) also state that the expressed vocational and educational aspirations of lower class children frequently appear unrealistically high. Unlike the similar aspirations of middle class children, these choices appear to represent not a functional level of striving but rather the impairment of realistic judgment under the cumulative effect of chronic failure. The high level of aspiration is interpreted by the Ausubels as reflecting a compensatory attempt to bolster self-esteem through the appearance rather than the actuality of aiming high. They also emphasize that Negro girls express higher achievement need and more mature and realistic aspirations than do Negro boys.

Since the child is unaware of the barriers between himself and the occupation, the aspirations of children between the ages of eight and eleven typically are fantasy choices, according to Ginzberg (5). The choices made between ages 12 and 17 are characterized as tentative since they reflect a growing recognition of the demands of the world of work. Bailyn (3) found a clear-cut difference between fifth-and sixth-grade boys' and girls' occupational and fantasized aspirations. "Top professional," the model occupational aspiration of 332 boys in five elementary schools of a Boston suburb, was the choice of 16 per cent of the boys and three per cent of the 294 girls. "Teacher," the first choice of the girls was given by 18 per cent of them and by none of the boys. When these children were asked to select from a list of fantasy characters, including President, movie star, and Superman, the one they would choose to become if a wish could bring about such a metamorphosis, the first

UD 000 914

choice of the boys was "Superman" (13 per cent) and of the girls "Movie Star" (45 per cent).

The occupational choices of boys and girls are restricted to the ones they know about. The cognitive component of children's vocational aspirations is little understood. DeFleur (4), however, reports that even the youngest among 237 children between the ages of six and thirteen in a midwestern community had acquired the basic idea of the prestige hierarchy among jobs and also considerable information about the labor force. Personal contact was more important than television programs, but television was more important than the general culture as a source of occupational knowledge.

The present study sought to ascertain the extent to which the boys and the girls in a New York City Higher Horizons elementary school differ in their aspirations to white-collar and professional occupations and their ability to identify specific white-collar and professional occupations. In describing the Higher Horizons elementary program, Landers (6) has stated that no two schools have precisely the same program, since the problems of the *de facto* segregated schools in Harlem are quite different from those of the *de facto* segregated schools in Queens, the locus of this study, where the population is socially mobile. Specific objectives of the Higher Horizons program include the creation of college aspiration.

PROCEDURES

Subjects. The subjects were 165 boys and 139 girls (all the pupils except those who spoke no English) enrolled in grades three through six in a Queens, New York, Higher Horizon elementary school with a total enrollment of 600, of whom approximately 90 per cent are Negroes. The school serves a segregated Negro community, a portion of which is predominantly middle class.

Method. Each boy and girl was interviewed individually and asked about his or her vocational aspirations. The occupational choices were categorized as "professional," "white collar," or "other." Professional occupations were defined as those requiring a minimum of a college degree or license from the state. Occupations coded as "white collar" were secretary, typist, telephone operator, or expression of a desire to "work in an office."

Each subject, following the interview, was shown the 18 plates of the *Vocational Apperception Test* (VAT) devised by Ammons, Butler, and Herzig (1) as a projective test for vocational research and guidance at the college level. The eight male-occupation plates and ten female-occupation plates were presented one at a time and the child was asked to identify the occupation depicted in each and the locus of its performance. The male occupations were teacher, executive, doctor, lawyer, engineer, personnel or social worker, salesman, and laboratory technician. The female occupations were laboratory technician, dietician, buyer, nurse, teacher, artist, secretary, social worker, mother, and housewife.

The child's response to each VAT plate was scored on a scale of zero to five. A maximum of three points was given for the occupation and two for the locus of performance. Responses reflecting the highest level of conceptualization were scored three points. For example, occupations ascribed to the male personnel or social-worker-plate included "social worker," "psychiatrist," "marriage counselor," and "detective," and any of these received the full three-point evaluation. At an intermediate level, scored two points, were "boss," "supervisor," "employer," or "manager," when given without elaboration. The lowest level of acceptable response, scored one point, were those indicating a knowledge of the function being performed but not of the job title. These were usually preceded by a "man who" and, in the case of the personnel or social worker, included "helps people buy a house," "gives jobs," or "helps people."

The locus given, when congruent with the job title, such as "employment agency," "station house," or "office," was scored two points. Responses such as "a place where you get" "loans," "jobs," or "money" received one point. Locus responses not preceded by an appropriate occupation were not scored.

Results

Extent of Professional Aspirations. Boys differed from girls in the extent of their professional and white-and blue-collar aspirations.

Professional and white-collar choices were given by 57 (30 per cent) of the 165 boys and by 118 (85 per cent) of the 139 girls. The boys gave twice as many (56) different occupations as did the

girls (28). More than half of the occupations given by both boys and girls received only one choice.

"Policeman," the first choice of the boys, was given by 30; second was "doctor," 24; "fireman" was third, with eight choices. The first choice of the girls, "nurse," was given by 49; second was "teacher," 36; third was "secretary," 11.

There was little overlapping in the boys' and girls' choices. Three girls wanted to become policewomen and three, doctors. Only one boy desired to become a teacher. Office work was the choice of 15 girls and one boy. "Hairdresser," and "houseworker," the girls' only manual choices, were each given by one girl. Manual occupations given by 26 (16 per cent) of the boys ranged from "plumber," "mechanic," and "bricklayer," to "movie usher," and "sweeping floors." No girl expressed a level of aspiration equivalent to that of two fourth-grade boys who wanted to become President or to two fifth-grade boys, one of whom wanted to become a millionaire, the other a movie star.

"Policeman" and "nurse" the modal occupational choices, were the only occupations given by boys and girls in all of the classes at each grade level.

TABLE 1

FREQUENCY OF EXPRESSION OF PROFESSIONAL ASPIRATIONS AMONG HIGH AND LOW ACADEMICALLY ACHIEVING BOYS AND GIRLS

Aspirational Level	High Academic Achievers		Low Academic Achievers		X^2 Value	Sig.
	N	%	N	%		
Boys						
Professional	21	41.2	21	29.2	123.	.001
Other	30	58.8	51	70.8		
Girls						
Professional	71	87.6	21	87.5	.001	N.S.
Other	10	12.4	3	12.5		

Table 1 contains the chi-square values for the comparison of frequency of professional aspirations among high- and low-achieving boys and girls. It is to be noted that the girls were superior

to the boys in academic achievement, comprising 61 per cent of the pupils in the highest, but only 26 per cent of the pupils in the lowest academically achieving class at each grade level. Professional aspirations were significanctly more frequent among the 51 high- than among the 71 low-achieving boys. In contrast, white collar and professional aspirations were expressed by 88 per cent of both the high- and low-achieving groups of girls.

TABLE 2

FREQUENCY OF EXPRESSION OF PROFESSIONAL ASPIRATIONS AMONG THE SIXTH- AND THIRD-GRADE BOYS AND GIRLS

Aspirational Level	Sixth Grade N	Sixth Grade %	Third Grade N	Third Grade %	X^2 Value	Sig.
Boys						
Professional	17	42.5	15	39.5	.066	N.S.
Other	23	57.5	23	60.5		
Girls						
Professional	32	91.4	30	73.4	5.01	.05
Other	3	8.6	8	26.6		

Table 2 presents the chi-square values obtained for the comparison of frequency of professional aspirations at the sixth- and third-grade levels. Sixth- and third-grade boys did not differ sigficantly, but professional aspirations were significantly more frequent among sixth- than among third-grade girls.

TABLE 3

BOYS' AND GIRLS' MEAN IDENTIFICATION SCORES FOR THE VOCATIONAL APPERCEPTION TEST PLATES

	N	Mean	S.D.	t	Sig.
Boys	165	48.63	14.43	.621	N.S.
Girls	139	52.34	13.04		
Boys					
Professional Aspiring	57	54.12	11.40	3.98	.01
Other	108	45.79	14.86		
Girls					
Professional Aspiring	118	52.60	13.78	.92	N.S.
Other	21	49.38	14.52		

Ability to Identify Professional Occupations. The maximum identification score for the 18 VAT plates was 90. Table 3 contains the *t* values and significance levels for the differences between three pairs of mean identification scores, those for all boys and all girls, those for professionally-aspiring boys and non-professionally-aspiring boys, and those for professionally-aspiring girls and non-professionally-aspiring girls.

In their ability to identify the occupations depicted in the VAT plates, the total group of boys did not differ from the total group of girls. Neither did the two groups of girls differ significantly. The professionally-aspiring boys, however were significantly superior to the non-professionally-aspiring boys in their ability to identify occupations.

TABLE 4

BOYS' AND GIRLS' MEAN IDENTIFICATION SCORES FOR EACH OF THE VOCATIONAL APPERCEPTION TEST PLATES

	Boys, N = 165		Girls, N = 139	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Male Plates				
Doctor	4.82	.62	4.78	.62
Lawyer	3.21	2.22	3.40	2.06
Personnel or Social Worker	2.80	2.20	2.91	2.13
Laboratory Technician	2.68	1.63	2.41	1.68
Teacher	2.00	1.76	3.01	1.39*
Salesman	1.98	1.44	1.86	1.50
Engineer	1.94	2.03	2.22	2.10
Executive or Office Worker	1.52	1.87	1.63	1.96
Female Plates				
Nurse	3.88	.86	3.71	1.41
Mother	3.66	1.62	3.92	1.40
Artist	3.37	1.38	3.58	1.35
Teacher	3.30	1.94	4.20	1.05**
Housewife	3.16	1.50	3.41	1.45
Buyer	2.79	1.68	2.87	1.35
Secretary	2.77	2.00	3.33	1.91***
Laboratory Technician	2.40	1.25	2.37	1.29
Social Worker	2.23	1.19	2.14	1.19
Dietician	1.21	1.56	1.50	1.65

* $t = 5.61$ (sig. at .001 level)
** $t = 5.294$ (sig. at .001 level)
*** $t = 3.41$ (sig. at .001 level)

Table 4 presents the mean identification scores obtained by boys and girls for each of the 18 VAT plates. The girls' mean scores for the plates of the male and female teachers and the secretary were significantly superior to the boys' scores. It is not that the boys were unable to identify the teachers' occupations, but rather that a greater number of the girls than of the boys took cognizance of the age of the students and identified the teachers as either college professors or instructors. However, the secretary was identified as such or as a typist by many more girls than boys.

The plates of the doctor, lawyer, personnel worker, nurse, mother, and artist provided little difficulty for either boys or girls. Indeed, the variance reflects differences in levels of identification of locus rather than of occupations. In interpreting the mean scores presented in Table 4, it is very important to note that many occupations other than those ascribed to the VAT plates by the test authors were credited when deemed appropriate.

The plates for the engineer, executive, female social worker, and dietician were the most difficult, even for the older and more academically able subjects. The engineer was usually identified as either an architect or draftsman. While "office worker" was given a response, no boy or girl described the executive or female social worker as such. The latter was described as either a Red Cross or visiting nurse. Except for three high-achieving girls, the dietician was identified as either a nurse or a waitress.

Relationship of Occupational Choices and Occupations Identified

Three occupations depicted in the male plates — personnel or social worker, laboratory technician, and salesman — were not given as occupational choices by any boys. However, "doctor" was the choice of 24 boys; "lawyer," 4; "teacher," 1; "engineer," 7; and "office worker," one boy. No girl expressed a desire to be a housewife, buyer, laboratory technician, or dietician. "Nurse," "teacher," and "secretary" were their first three choices. Only two girls expressed a desire to be a mother and three an artist and only one girl wanted to become a social worker.

Discussion

A limitation of this or any investigation of children's vocational aspirations is that their responses to the query, "What would you like to be or do when you grow up?" may be influenced by many factors, including their perception of what is expected or likely to please the interrogator. Yet, only two fourth- and two fifth-grade boys and one fourth-grade girl did not express a vocational choice, and very few gave alternate goals.

Not only were professional and white-collar aspirations expressed far more frequently by girls than by boys, but with significantly greater frequency by the former than among the girls in Bailyn's (3) study. A reanalysis of Bailyn's data *(i.e.,* recoding her categories as "professional," "white collar," and "other") indicates that 44 per cent of the boys and 67 per cent of the girls, as compared to 35 per cent of the boys and 85 per cent of the girls in the present study, expressed either white-collar or professional aspirations. The chi-square value, 3.75, is not significant in the case of the boys, but in the case of the girls studied in the two investigations the chi-square value is a highly significant (.001) 15.42.

If the present level of academic achievement is taken as the criterion, the girls would appear to be less realistic in their aspirations than the boys. Only 29 per cent of the low-achieving boys, in contrast to 88 per cent of the low-achieving girls, aspired to professional and white-collar occupations. However, the expression of a desire to become a nurse, teacher, or secretary on the part of lower class girls can be interpreted in various ways. It may be that such preferences reflect a positive attitude among these girls to self and school. Also, it might be pointed out that female Negroes provide girls with better models and identification figures, as a group, than do male Negroes provide boys. That the girls aimed higher than did the boys is consistent with the preferential treatment accorded girls in the lower class Negro matriarchal family (2).

Seemingly more significant and disturbing are the findings that 59 per cent of the high-academically-achieving boys did not express a level of vocational aspirations comparable to that of the girls. Also the sixth-grade boys did not differ from the third-grade boys in the extent of their choice of white-collar and professional voca-

tions. These findings raise the question of the extent of the impact of schooling, even in a "Higher Horizons" school, on the aspirational level of Negro boys.

While amenable to quantitative appraisal, the assessment of children's vocational understanding presents some formidable problems. In granting credit for alternate but appropriate job-title responses to the *Vocational Apperception Test* plates and partial credit for the recognition of the function being performed when a job title was not supplied, it is entirely possible that differences may have been obscured as well as delineated among and between boys and girls. This procedure was necessitated, however, by the variety of job titles given by the subjects when viewing the less occupationally-structured plates. For example, the male social- or personnel-worker-plate elicited 31 different job titles and eight different function responses ("man who settles problems"), but 26 boys and 25 girls were unable to provide either a job title or to describe the function being performed. Of this group of subjects, only seven boys and girls failed to receive any credit because they focused on the lady rather than the stimulus figure or gave such erroneous job titles as "plumber."

While questioning was minimal, experiences at home, "My mother is a dietician;" in the community, "That's a doctor who's got his own job," (*i.e.*, in private practice); in the Higher Horizons program, "We visited the Consolidated Edison plant," could be discerned in the subjects' responses to the VAT plates. But their understanding of the occupations of the lawyer, personnel or social worker, and male laboratory technician, among others, appeared from their comments to have been derived from television, including the commercials.

That girls were significantly superior to boys in their responses to the male- and female-teacher-plates and to the secretary-plate is consonant with their aspirations to these occupations. Their superiority with the male-teacher-plate may also be suggestive of fundamental differences between boys' and girls' attitudes toward the school. Among boys there was also a consistency between the interest and the occupational knowledge of professionally-aspiring boys. In identifying the 18 stimulus occupations they were significantly superior to the boys with other aspirations.

Boys and girls were also consistent in that none of those who aspired to a particular stimulus occupation failed to supply the appropriate job title for the pertinent plate. Very few boys or girls could identify the engineer, executive, female social worker, or dietician. However, "Dietician" is included in an aspirational inventory given to the girls in the New York City Junior High Schools.

In contrast to the inability to supply appropriate job titles for some of the stimulus occupations, only two girls and four boys did not express their aspirations in terms of a job title. While some of the stimulus occupations may be remote from the daily experience of the children, more boys and girls were able to identify the female portrait painter than could identify the secretary or typist, occupations being performed in their own school. These findings raise the question of whether or not the incidental acquisition of occupational information by culturally disadvantaged elementary children should be supplemented by direct instruction.

Conclusion

This study provides little encouragement for the view that inspirational efforts in the elementary school raise or channel the aspirational level of culturally disadvantaged boys toward occupations for which college graduation is a requisite. The findings suggest that either cataloging the vocational choices of culturally disadvantaged children or categorizing them along continua of realism or altitude conceals their lack of occupational information. Rather, the need is for further exploration of the cognitive component of the aspirations of boys and girls and for direct assessment of the sources, level, and extent of their knowledge of occupations. This approach would yield a much-needed, empirically-derived base line of occupational information, making more feasible the determination of the extent to which such information should be included in the elementary school curriculum for disadvantaged children.

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